

ARE WOMEN'S CLUBS TOO ABSORBING?

The Countess of Aberdeen Makes an Appeal to the American Women for the American Home.

A VERY remarkable event took place at the Auditorium during the convocation of the University of Chicago. The immense audience hall was crowded with a gay and brilliant assembly, the women in the boxes being all in evening dress. On the platform were seated the faculty and trustees of the university, wearing the academic cap and gown, and though the university is so young in years, if old in wisdom, most of the professors wore the colors which designated the honors they had received from the older universities as well as foreign ones. Back of the faculty were seated the undergraduates and the students, also in cap and gown, who were to take special orders of degrees. When the procession filed on to the platform the vast audience arose, and stood until all were seated.

On the morning of that day I had been in the audience at the same place which was gathered to listen to Mr. Moody, who was conducting a series of revival meetings. No one could fail being impressed with the different atmosphere of the two occasions, though both were elevating and both interesting, but oh, so different. At the Moody meeting the audience exhibited an emotional and intense interest. In the evening the religious element, rather than the emotional, was apparent. Quieted and sobered by intellectual culture, never was the "psychology of a crowd" better illustrated than in these two meetings, and had any one a doubt of what atmosphere signified, they would have comprehended at once by having been present on these two occasions.

Professor Peabody, of Harvard, gave the keynote of the occasion in his opening prayer—earnest and stately, and yet so simple that a little child could understand. But the remarkable feature of the convocation was the central figure seated next to President Harper on the platform. It was the Countess of Aberdeen, wife of the Governor-General of Canada. A woman was for the first time in the history of the higher universities invited to deliver the convocation address. The selection of Her Excellency was a happy thought in many ways. Her connection with England and Canada made it more official, and gave an international aspect to the event, honoring, as it were, all women of the English speaking peoples. The Countess is a beautiful woman, "divinely tall," of the extreme Anglo-Saxon type, with a full, rounded, distinct voice, which is the special gift of our English sisters. She read her address from a manuscript, her subject being "The Effect of a University Education on the Home," a subject most vitally interesting at present both to men and women.

In her address the speaker discussed organization, especially the organizations among women. She expressed her surprise that she had been selected to give such an address, a woman without a university training and of another country, and she felt, therefore, doubly honored. She spoke of the great federations and organizations of women at the present day, and of the necessity which first existed for woman to educate herself in self-control, in intellectual hospitality, in co-operation, and that only in organizations composed of women alone could they have acquired the necessary self poise and courage to express their own opinions and the liberality of listening to those of others without irritation.

The revival of the home is the mission which Lady Aberdeen urges, not alone on college women, but on all women. "Home life relieved of its drudgery because organization has been brought into it; home life permeated with the influence of culture based on equality of education, of responsibility and of opportunity; home life based on a mutual knowledge of one another's nature and mission." These are noble and true words, and the note of warning which they convey is not premature.

The woman's club movement is a great educator, but it has now reached the period of development where it should endeavor to be a power in the community, not through the preponderance of the woman element in philanthropy or in social life, but because its members have educated themselves to the point of being able to grasp the benefits to be derived from co-operation, and they now feel their experience in organization has enabled them to have



The Countess of Aberdeen.

opinions of their own and yet work in perfect harmony with others for the bettering of civic or community life.

The clubs should now reach out beyond the limits of their membership and extend their influence by giving the privileges of the club to the families which the members represent. A large club should have a board of advisers of men, specialists in the lines of work which the club has organized. A daughters' day and children's day also could be established, and thus the close corporation feeling would be avoided, and the family would cease to consider the club as their possible rival in mothers' affections. Neither should the speakers at the club meetings be always women; among the many men who are students of philanthropy or of social economics there are some who have a most important message to deliver to society, and a woman's club furnishes an ideal audience for such a speaker. Artists and authors, even statesmen and business men, would be glad to address the great women's clubs throughout the United States on the subjects which interest them, for the sympathetic interest of an audience of intelligent women will always be pleasant, and rightly so, to a man. Thus by using specialists, whether a man or a woman, many mistakes in amateur philanthropy, civics or education, are avoided, and when a subject is presented by both men and women the one-sex view is obviated. It would be a strange anomaly if the so-called woman movement were to put into the world the exclusively feminine point of view instead of the exclusively masculine one, which women deplore. It is from the mingling of the two that wisdom comes.

The Countess of Aberdeen's plea for the revival of the home is applicable to club women as to university women, for the club is the university of many women, and it needs to have such an ideal put into words.